

PERSONALITY TYPE AND LEADERSHIP FOCUS: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF AND LINE-MANAGER PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between personality type and leadership focus is examined in this article. Personality type is assessed by means of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and leadership focus is explored both with participants and their line-managers using a Leadership Focus Questionnaire. Petroleum company mid-level managers form the target population of 220. Three leadership focus hypotheses are tested with 53 respondents, addressing (1) optimising external and internal focus, (2) fit with organisation type, and (3) managing a multiple focus. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient, ANOVA and paired T-tests are applied. Results show that in circumstances associated with change, Feeling and Perceiving types are favoured for managing the stress of competing leadership demands. Line-managers of participants rely more on Intuition while participants prefer Sensing in dealing with external stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

A central element of any executive leadership development programme is the improvement of self-knowledge. This is based on the premise that a greater understanding of self and personal preferences will assist the leader in optimising focus when dealing with complex challenges and choices. An extension of this premise is that self-knowledge can also assist the leader in knowing when to seek the assistance of others with different skills and perspectives to improve overall decision making.

In the shaping and delivery of an Executive Leadership Development Programme (ELDP) for the mid-level managers of a petroleum company across Africa in 2006 and 2007, self-mastery was a primary consideration. All participants completed the Myers-Briggs Step II Type Indicator personality assessment prior to the commencement of the ELDP, as well as a Leadership Focus Questionnaire (LFQ). Their immediate line managers were also asked to complete the LFQ on the participant(s) for whom they were responsible. The purpose of these assessments was to improve self-awareness about both personality preferences and approach to leadership focus.

It is recognised that the role of the organisation leader requires by most definitions a multiple focus across the various elements of the organisation and the environment within which the organisation operates (Sieff & Carstens, 2006). The effective leader is expected to address stakeholder needs, be an agent of change, instil followership amongst staff, and set the course for the organisation. To realise these expectations, the organisation leader must understand the trends, shocks and uncertainties in the external environment that may affect the organisation, and promote the internal human and organisational dynamics that will maximise organisation potential.

A number of skill-sets are needed for the leader to be able to meet these demands, and a meta-skill may be required to achieve the most appropriate balance of focus across the various areas demanding leadership attention (Sieff & Carstens, 2006).

Leadership skills can be considered in two broad categories (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan & Switzler, 1996). Firstly, there are those skills concerning what happens within the organisation. These include managing and motivating people, organising staff into effective structures, communicating direction, and developing or recruiting the skills required for organisational effectiveness. Then there are the skills needed to notice, understand and respond to the various external factors that affect the organisation. These factors may include developments in the areas of technology, government, environment, society and the economy. They are also likely to include global trends, shocks and uncertainties, as well as competitor responses to the external environment.

Self-awareness and self-management are important attributes for leadership success. Equally, a leader can gain valuable insights by learning about the way in which his or her strengths and weaknesses are perceived by others in the workplace. In particular, since the line-manager is tasked with the responsibility for managing the performance of the leader, he or she can offer valuable perceptions.

An important aim of a leadership development programme, such as that run by this petroleum company for their mid-level managers, is to assist the participants to discover more about the nature of issues that each prefers to address in the leadership role, and to thereby encourage decision making with regard to: (1) prioritising strategic focus areas; (2) allocating time appropriately; and (3) utilising support staff with complementary strengths. In addition, organisation effectiveness may be enhanced through attending to (1) the personal development of the leader; (2) the most appropriate delegation of responsibility to a leadership team; and (3) the type of organisation most suited to the leader.

The research problem considers the challenges of optimising focus and managing risk that are inherent in strategic leadership. These challenges can be encapsulated by a three-fold definition of the problem, as suggested in previous research (Sieff & Carstens, 2006). Firstly, the leader's personality type influences the way in which he or she tries to balance the internal and external factors that affect decision-making. Secondly, the personality type of a leader can influence his or her effectiveness; this will also depend on the type of organisation. Thirdly, strategic leaders must demonstrate an ability

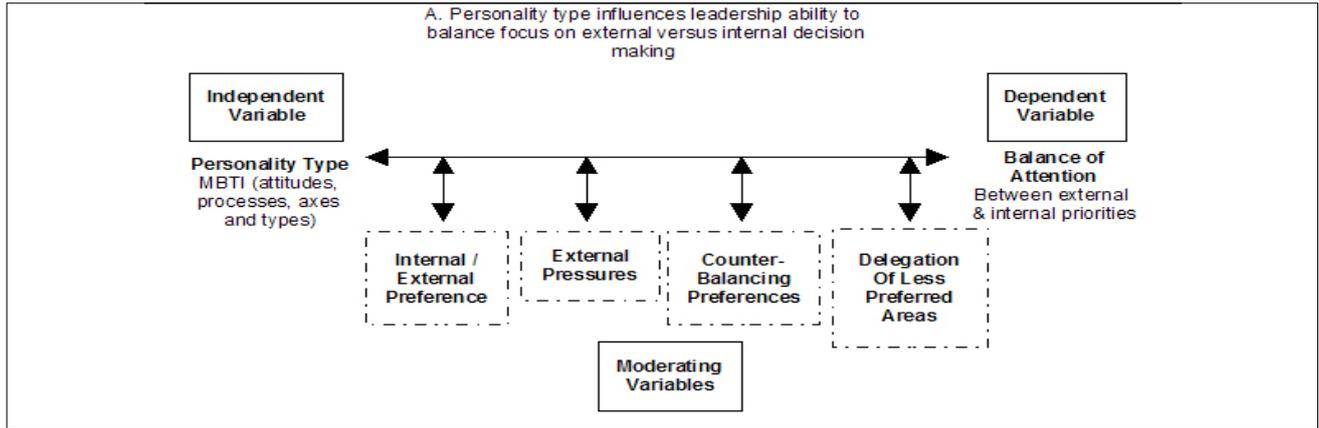


FIGURE 1
Primary Hypothesis One

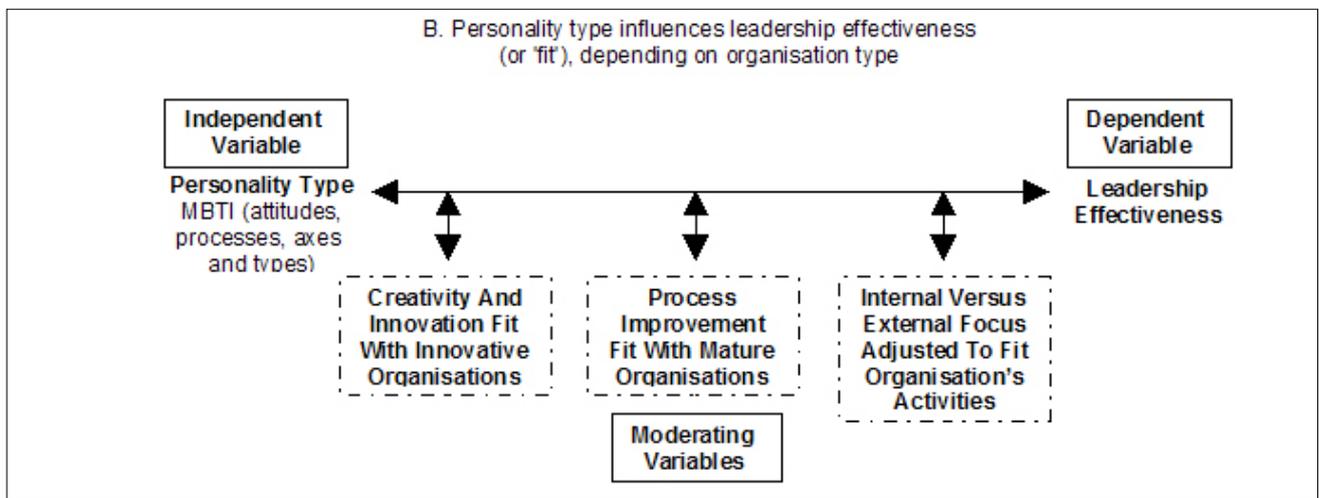


FIGURE 2
Primary Hypothesis Two

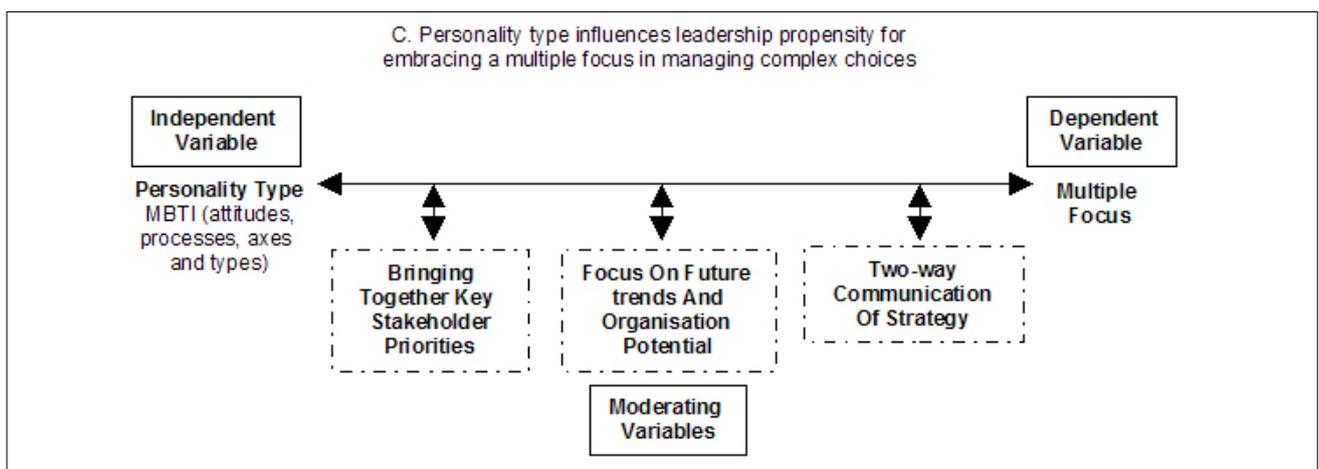


FIGURE 3
Primary Hypothesis Three

to allow for a multiple focus in managing complex choices. A number of variables need to be considered in relation to each of these three primary hypotheses, as is illustrated in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

The research aims to assist leaders in identifying where they may lack sufficient focus, and to determine what actions they may need to take to optimise their balance of focus. The qualities of strategic leadership depend on the leader developing such awareness in both thought and action.

The complexity of the leadership role has been explored extensively in the literature, with particular reference to the part played by personality. Research into leadership personality has focussed on the following areas or issues:

- the relationship between personality and leadership focus (Sieff & Carstens, 2006)
- competing values (Belasen & Frank, 2007)
- the capacity for cognitive complexity (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001)
- style diversity (Gill, 2004; Politis, 2003; Shelton, McKenna & Darling, 2002)
- building a cohesive culture (Shelton *et al.*, 2002; Schein, 1985)
- forming successful and sustainable relationships (Testa, 2002; Weymes, 2003)
- emotional intelligence (Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005)
- achieving congruence between self and stakeholder perceptions (Testa, 2002)
- self-leadership and personal effectiveness (Houghton, Bonham, Neck & Singh, 2004; Kets de Vries, 2001; Klagge, 1996)
- the ability to balance conflicting priorities (Patterson *et al.*, 1996)
- the capacity to transform (Barling, Slater & Kelloway, 2000; Carless, 2001; Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003; Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2003)
- the importance of particular traits, such as humility and determination (Collins, 2001).

While no one framework can claim to offer a definitive basis for understanding the personality of a leader, Jungian personality theory does provide a basis for understanding the complexity of the leadership role. This approach is based on the following three principles: (1) the principle of opposites – every wish immediately suggests its opposite; (2) the principle of equivalence – the energy created from opposition is shared equally by both sides; and (3) the principle of entropy – the tendency for oppositions to come together, and for energy to decrease over a person's lifetime.

These three principles recognise the complexity of personality, the dilemmas that inevitably arise from the tensions between opposites, and the wisdom of balance. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator¹ assessment methodology derives from Jungian theory and provides a means to understand some of this complexity.

Fitzgerald and Kirby (1997) note that the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument has become an important tool to assist in valuing and understanding how best to take advantage of diversity and understand and value differences. This is because:

- the workplace is becoming increasingly diverse
- there continues to be both expansion in scope and refinement in focus of target markets; the tendency to reduce staff while also attempting to meet higher stakeholder expectations requires high performance levels, which are best achieved through recognising individual uniqueness
- organisations are becoming more internally complex to

enable them to deal with increasingly complex external environments.

With regard to internal complexity, this is better managed by valuing and accommodating differences, which is facilitated by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument considers four separate dichotomies of individual personality type, namely: (1) Extraversion (E) versus Introversion (I); (2) Sensing (S) versus Intuition (N); (3) Thinking (T) versus Feeling (F); and (4) Judging (J) versus Perceiving (P).

In each case, an individual is assumed to have a preference for one of each pair of opposites. With the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument:

the four preferences direct the characteristic use of perception and judgement by an individual...(and)... affect not only what is attended to in any given situation but also how conclusions are drawn about what has been perceived.

(Myers, McCauley, Quenk & Hammer, 1998, p. 6)

The concept of strategic leadership extends beyond the personality of the leader. The literature supporting the three primary hypotheses relating to the leadership focus can be grouped into three categories (Sieff & Carstens, 2006):

1. Optimising the Balance of Focus between Internal and External Factors
2. Leadership Fit with Organisation Culture and Type
3. Leadership Capacity for a Multiple Focus.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach

The following methodological approach was used in the design of this study:

1. **Utilisation of previously tested assessment tools.** Both the Myers Briggs Type Indicator personality assessment and the LFQ have been used in previous research. In this study, the LFQ was used both in assessing the participant and in assessing the line-manager's perception of the participant. The Myers Briggs Form Q Step II was applied to all participants and then converted to get raw scores equivalent to Form M.
2. **Survey-based, primarily quantitative methodology.** The survey construction allowed for responses that can be analysed quantitatively. Open-ended questions were also included at the end of the survey to capture thoughts, opinions and other suggestions.
3. **Timing.** The assessment tools were all applied prior to the commencement of the leadership development programme intervention, as part of the pre-work requirement of the programme.

Research method

Participants

The target population was the group of managers and leaders employed by a petroleum company in African countries attending an ELDP in either 2006 or 2007 run by Wits Business School (WBS), University of Witwatersrand, in South Africa. These programmes were each delivered in multiple stages with face-to-face sessions held in South Africa, Kenya, Morocco and Egypt.

In the study period, the population of mid-level managers in the Africa region of the petroleum company that were expected to attend a leadership development programme of this nature was approximately 220. Each year, mid-level managers are selected for the programme on the basis of their having potential to become senior managers within five years, or their having just been appointed to a senior manager role. Of this population, the

1. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Myers-Briggs, MBTI, and Introduction to Type are trademarks or registered trademarks of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Trust in the United States and other countries.

TABLE 1
First and second order factors

Second order Factors		First order Factors	
2 nd order Factor 1	1 st order Factor 4	1 st order factor 2	1 st order factor
Challenge with Leadership Focus (37.666% of variation explained)	Stress of Balancing Competing Demands (4.878% of variation explained)		
2 nd order factor 2	1 st order factor 1	1 st order factor 2	1 st order factor
Comfort with Leader Leadership Focus (14.339% of variation explained)	Comfort with Organisation Fit (16.451% of variation explained)	Future Strategic Thinking (8.924% of variation explained)	Communicating Strategy to Stakeholders (4.648% of variation explained)
	1 st order factor 3		
	Demands of External Stakeholders (6.176% of variation explained)		

TABLE 2
Relationship between challenge with leadership focus and the LFQ

2 nd -order Factor	1 st -order Factor	LFQ Questions	Theory-based Preliminary Factor
Challenge with Leadership Focus	Stress of Balancing Competing Demands	30. I take on too much and cannot do justice to everything; some priorities are not properly dealt with by me (variable 19)	Balancing internal and external priorities
		16. I find the challenge of dealing with competing and conflicting demands of different stakeholders stressful and draining of my energy (variable 31)	Approach to managing a multiple focus
		32. I tend to prefer to address some important issues at the expense of others in my current role (variable 12)	Balancing internal and external priorities
		1. My colleagues would say that I am good at balancing my time across competing priorities (variable 14 - <i>inverted</i>)	Balancing internal and external priorities
		24. I prefer a working lunch at my desk or with staff than dining with prospective customers (variable 3)	Balancing internal and external priorities
		11. Urgent rather than important tasks tend to take up my time (variable 17)	Balancing internal and external priorities
		31. I tend to give priority to issues that are mostly different from those given priority to by my organisation (variable 26)	Fit with organisation type
		36. In our organisation we only reveal new strategic initiatives to staff when they are being implemented (variable 42)	Approach to managing a multiple focus
		37. Increasing due diligence requirements has resulted in less time for staff management (variable 9)	Balancing internal and external priorities
		39. More of my time is taken up with internal issues than marketing and sales issues (variable 1)	Balancing internal and external priorities
		43. My personal style is significantly different from the culture of my organisation (variable 23)	Fit with organisation type
		7. I am often frustrated by my organisation giving priority to the wrong kinds of issues in the allocation of time, resources & executive focus (variable 27)	Fit with organisation type

managers attending the programmes in 2006 and 2007 comprised 65 delegates, of which 53 completed all the assessment tools. These 53 delegates formed the sample for this study. This sample size, at 24% of the population, is slightly smaller than that required by standard guidelines for determining sample sizes, based on Stoker (1981), in Roodt (2004).

Measuring instruments/methods of data gathering

The independent variable, personality type, was assessed via the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument, an instrument that is widely validated. The dependent variable, leadership focus, was assessed via the Leadership Focus Questionnaire (LFQ), developed by the author and tested previously (Sieff and Carstens, 2006).

The LFQ is a survey instrument designed to discover more about the relationship between personality type and leadership focus. It consists of three sections. Section A contains 41 quantitative questions covering various elements of the three theoretical hypotheses on leadership focus, and five placebo

questions. The questions are answered on a Likert scale. Section B consists of a number of open-ended qualitative questions on leadership focus, designed to capture other thoughts and feelings that the respondent may want to share. Section C requests demographic and work-related information from the respondent.

The LFQ was presented in two forms. The original form is designed for self-assessment. The modified version is designed for line-manager assessment of a leader reporting to him or her.

Procedure

Both the LFQ and the MBTI were administered as a part of the pre-work requirement for the ELDPs. The LFQ for line-managers was also administered prior to the commencement of the programmes. For both ELDPs the instruments were given to the delegates in mid-January and had to be completed by mid-February, allowing for a month for completion. The programmes started in late-February in both 2006 and 2007. In both studies,

TABLE 3
Relationship between comfort with leadership focus and the LFQ

2 nd -order Factor	1 st -order Factor	LFQ Questions	Theory-based Preliminary Factor
Comfort with Leadership Focus	Comfort with Organisation Type	35. In attending to pressing issues I adjust my focus to best fit with the priority given by my organisation (variable 25)	Fit with organisation type
		34. I work in a team environment where we allocate responsibility for pressing issues in a way that ensures that the most important issues are addressed (variable 18)	Balancing internal and external priorities
		40. My organisation can be best described as having a well developed process improvement focus (variable 21)	Fit with organisation type
		20. I make a point of encouraging two-way communication sessions with staff about strategic initiatives (variable 39)	Approach to managing a multiple focus
	Focus on Future and Strategic Thinking	22. I try to match emerging opportunities in the market-place with the inherent potential of the organisation (variable 36)	Approach to managing a multiple focus
		23. I often think about future challenges and opportunities we need to prepare for in the organisation (variable 32)	Approach to managing a multiple focus
		15. I enjoy the challenge of dealing with multiple issues (variable 30)	Approach to managing a multiple focus
		21. I make sure that I balance my time appropriately across operational and competitive issues (variable 11)	Balancing internal and external priorities
		3. I allocate sufficient time to internal and external stakeholders associated with the organisation (variable 28)	Approach to managing a multiple focus
	Communicating Strategy to Stakeholders	17. I engage in regular feedback sessions with my staff (variable 38)	Approach to managing a multiple focus
12. I keep everyone informed about those strategic initiatives under my control (variable 37)		Approach to managing a multiple focus	
18. I try to develop each staff member to his / her full potential (variable 33)		Approach to managing a multiple focus	
41. I tend to focus on those job responsibilities that interest me (variable 15 - <i>inverted</i>)		Balancing internal and external priorities	
2. I have been criticised for not paying attention to certain important aspects of the business (variable 13 - <i>inverted</i>)		Balancing internal and external priorities	

TABLE 4
Relationship between demands of external stakeholders and the LFQ

2 nd -order Factor	1 st -order Factor	LFQ Questions	Theory-based Preliminary Factor
N/A	Demands of External Stakeholders	33. I tend to spend more time addressing issues external to the organisation (e.g. competitive, legislative, global, technological factors) than internal to the organisation (concerning staff, roles, processes, operations) (variable 24)	Fit with organisation type
		42. My personal performance is influenced more by my ability to address the needs of external stakeholders than those of staff and internal efficiencies (variable 8)	Balancing internal and external priorities
		29. I spend more time with external stakeholders than with staff (variable 2)	Balancing internal and external priorities

Form Q (or Step II) of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Instrument was administered. The results were subsequently converted to be equivalent to Form M responses for the purposes of comparison with previous research findings.

Statistical analysis

Factors derived from the application of the LFQ in previous research (Sief & Carstens, 2006) with a larger sample size were used for the purpose of analysis of this sample. These leadership focus factors were tested against the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator attitudes, processes, functions and types to identify differences in response based on personality type.

The relationships between the factors, the three primary hypotheses used to construct the LFQ, and the LFQ questions are displayed in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Representativeness of sample

While the sample frame specifically only included mid-level managers eligible to attend the ELDP in 2006 and 2007, they

were considered by company management to be typically representative of other mid-level managers and senior managers who had attended previous ELDPs.

Bias in sample

Given the fact that all participants belong to one organisation, it is prudent to consider the possibility of bias manifesting in the sample, for the following reasons: (1) since not all organisations invest in sending their executives on education programmes, the sample may carry some bias towards executives employed by those organisations who do; and (2) the respondents were mostly middle managers. Although it is these managers who are predominantly in leadership roles in South African businesses, they are not necessarily representative of executives at even more senior levels of management. Generalisations made from the research propositions should therefore be treated with caution. Further study amongst executives from a broader range of organisations and at more senior levels in their organisations is recommended.

Comparison with previous research

The results of this research are compared with previous research administering the same instruments.

RESULTS

LFQ relationship with MBTI attitudes and processes

The five LFQ first-order factors and two second-order factors, seven factors in all, were correlated against the four attitudes (Extraversion, Introversion, Judging and Perceiving), and the four processes (Sensing, Intuition, Thinking and Feeling) of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument, using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient to determine any statistically significant relationships.

These correlations were applied twice, first for LFQ responses from the sample participants, then for LFQ responses from the line-managers of these participants.

In all instances, the hypothesised proposition was that there is a statistically significant relationship between each LFQ factor and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument attitude or process, as follows:

H0: There is no relationship between the LFQ first-order factor (x1..x5) or second-order factor (x6..x7) and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument attitude or process (E, I, J, P, S, N, T, F)

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between the LFQ first-order factor (x1..x5) or second-order factor (x6..x7) and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument attitude or process (E, I, J, P, S, N, T, F)

The notation used in the hypotheses (e.g. '(x1..x5)' above) requires that the hypothesis be considered for each of the variables included in the hypothesis. For example, the null and alternate hypotheses above apply for each of the five first-order factors and two second-order factors.

The research proposition, H1, may be accepted at the 0.01 level of significance in the following instances:

For the participant responses:

1. First-order factor 2, 'Focus on Future and Strategic Thinking', is positively correlated to S.

For the line-manager responses:

1. First-order factor 2, 'Focus on Future and Strategic Thinking', is positively correlated to J and inversely correlated to P.

The research proposition, H1, may also be accepted at the 0.05 level of significance in the following instances:

For the participant responses:

1. First-order factor 1, 'Comfort with Organisation Fit', is positively correlated to S and inversely correlated to N;
2. First-order factor 2, 'Focus on Future and Strategic Thinking', is positively correlated to P and inversely correlated to J;
3. First-order factor 3, 'Demands of External Stakeholders', is positively correlated to S and inversely correlated to N;
4. First-order factor 4, 'Stress of Balancing Competing Demands', is positively correlated to F and inversely corrected to T;
5. First-order factor 5, 'Communicating Strategy to Stakeholders', is positively correlated to T and inversely correlated to F;
6. Second-order factor 2, 'Comfort with Focus in the Leadership Role', is positively correlated to S and inversely correlated to N.

For line-manager responses:

1. First-order factor 2, 'Focus on Future and Strategic Thinking', is positively correlated to F and inversely correlated to T;
2. First-order factor 3, 'Demands of External Stakeholders', is

positively correlated to I, N, and T and inversely correlated to E, S, and F;

3. First-order factor 4, 'Stress of Balancing Competing Demands', is positively correlated to P and inversely correlated to J;
4. First-order factor 5, 'Communicating Strategy to Stakeholders', is positively correlated to P and inversely correlated to J;
5. Second-order factor 1, 'Challenge with Focus in the Leadership Role', is positively correlated to N and inversely correlated to S;
6. Second-order factor 2, 'Comfort with Focus in the Leadership Role', is positively correlated to E and P and inversely correlated to I and J.

In all other instances, the null hypothesis, H0, must be accepted with regard to the relationship between LFQ factors and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument attitudes and processes.

LFQ relationship with MBTI axes

The five LFQ first-order factors and two second-order factors were correlated against the four axes (these are the two-element combinations of the two process dichotomies: NT, NF, ST, and SF) of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument to determine any statistically significant relationships using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. In all instances, the hypothesised proposition was that there is a statistically significant relationship between each LFQ factor and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument axis, as follows:

H0: There is no relationship between the LFQ first-order factor (x1..x5) or second-order factor (x6..x7) and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument axis (NT, ST, NF, SF);

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between the LFQ first-order factor (x1..x5) or second-order factor (x6..x7) and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument axis (NT, ST, NF, SF).

These correlations were applied twice, first for LFQ responses from the sample participants, then for LFQ responses from the line-managers of these participants.

The research proposition, H1, may be accepted at the 0.01 level of significance in the following instances:

For the participant responses:

1. Second-order factor 2, 'Comfort with Focus in the Leadership Role', is positively correlated to ST and inversely correlated to NF.

For the line-manager responses:

1. First-order factor 3, 'Demands of External Stakeholders', is positively correlated to NF;
2. Second-order factor 1, 'Challenge with Focus in the Leadership Role', is positively correlated to ST.

The research proposition, H1, may also be accepted at the 0.05 level of significance in the following instances:

For the participant responses:

1. First-order factor 1, 'Comfort with Organisation Fit', is positively correlated to SF and inversely correlated to NT;
2. First-order factor 2, 'Focus on Future and Strategic Thinking', is positively correlated to NF and SF, and inversely correlated to NT and ST.

For the line-manager responses:

1. First-order factor 1, 'Comfort with Organisation Fit', is positively correlated to ST and inversely correlated to NF;
2. First-order factor 3, 'Demands of External Stakeholders', is positively correlated to NT, and inversely correlated to ST;
3. First-order factor 4, 'Stress of Balancing Competing Demands', is positively correlated to NF;
4. Second-order factor 1, 'Challenge with Focus in the

Leadership Role', is inversely correlated to NF.

In all other instances, the null hypothesis, H0, must be accepted with regard to the relationship between LFQ factors and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument axes.

LFQ relationship with MBTI types

The respondents were each assigned one of 16 possible Myers-Briggs Type Indicator types, based on their completion of Form Q. Of these 16 type categories, only four had a sufficiently high sample weighting (11% or more of the study sample) to warrant inclusion in an ANOVA analysis.

The four included types (percentage of study sample in brackets) are: ESTJ (26.4%); ISTJ (18.9%); ENTJ (18.9%) and ENTP (11.3%). Three of these four types (all excluding ENTP) are typically most prevalent in business management and leadership studies (Kirby, 1997).

The ANOVA was applied for each of the five first-order-factors and two second-order factors of the LFQ to the four qualifying Myers-Briggs Type Indicator types, to determine statistically significant differences in factor response by Myers-Briggs Type Indicator type.

For the application of the ANOVA to the set of four qualifying types, the hypothesised proposition was that there are statistically significant differences between Myers-Briggs Type Indicator types in relation to each LFQ factor, as follows:

H0: There is no difference between Myers-Briggs Type Indicator qualifying types (x1..x4) for the LFQ first-order factor (x1..x5) or for the LFQ second-order factor (x6..x7);

H1: There are statistically significant differences between Myers-Briggs Type Indicator qualifying types (x1..x4) for the LFQ first-order factor (x1..x5) or for the LFQ second-order factor (x6..x7).

The research proposition, H1, may be accepted at the 0.05 level of significance for differences between the four qualifying types for the LFQ First-order factor, 'Communicating Strategy to Stakeholders'.

LFQ differences between participants and line-managers

The five LFQ first-order factors and two second-order factors were tested for difference between participant and line-manager responses in seven paired factor t-tests. In all instances, the hypothesised proposition was that there is a statistically significant difference between responses from participants and those from line managers for each LFQ factor, as follows:

H0: There is no difference between the pairs of LFQ first-order factor responses (x1..x5) or second-order responses (x6..x7) for participants and for line-managers;

H1: There is a significant difference between the pairs of LFQ first-order factor responses (x1..x5) or second-order responses (x6..x7) for participants and for line-managers.

The research proposition, H1, may be accepted at the 0.01 level of significance in the following instances:

1. Second-order factor 1, 'Challenge with Focus in the Leadership Role'.
2. There is also a directional difference at this level of significance for this factor, with the participant response being in stronger agreement than that of the line-manager.

The research proposition, H1, may be accepted at the 0.5 level of significance in the following instances:

1. First-order factor 4, 'Stress of Balancing Competing Demands', only with a directional difference where the participant response is in stronger agreement than that of the line-manager.
2. Second-order factor 2, 'Comfort with Focus in the Leadership Role', only with a directional difference of the participant

response being in stronger agreement than that of the line-manager.

DISCUSSION

Personality type and leadership focus factors

In contrasting the responses to the derived leadership focus factors between participants in the current research and their line-managers, a number of differences emerge that are worthy of discussion. A further comparison of responses from this research study and the findings of previous research also highlights both differences and similarities that are relevant to developing an understanding of the relationship between personality type and leadership focus.

Approach to Future and Strategic Thinking. In previous research (Steff and Carstens, 2006) statistically significant relationships between the personality type of a leader and his or her approach to future and strategic thinking were found in relation to the attitude dimension E-I, and the axes NT and SF, where E and NT were positively correlated and I and SF were negatively correlated to this factor. In the current study, an opposite relationship was found with the axes NT and SF. Specifically, NT and ST are negatively correlated and NF and SF are positively correlated to this factor.

These results are counter-intuitive, in that typically N and T suggest a preference for a logical consideration of big picture possibilities, which speak more clearly to a preference for future and strategic thinking, while S and F preferences are likely to be better attuned to the values and specifics of the here and now. These results may reflect a prevailing feeling in the organisation following a major change initiative that resulted in reorganisation and retrenchments being undertaken within the company at the time of this study. The initiative appeared to be driven strongly by T and J preferences of logic, fairness and action, with many staff feeling that their personal needs were not sufficiently considered. In other words, the change initiative may have lacked consideration of F in the way it was executed. Since this was the strategic change initiative affecting the immediate future of the participants, the responses indicate a current need for a feeling function to be positively correlated with future and strategic thinking. This is often absent in large organisations.

Another interesting finding to emerge from the current research is that the participants and their line-managers hold opposite views in relation to this factor for the lifestyle dimension J-P. Amongst participants, a preference for perceiving, P, is positively correlated with future and strategic thinking, while a preference for judging, J, is negatively correlated. In contrast, for the line-managers of these participants, J is positively correlated and P is negatively correlated with this factor. The result can be interpreted as follows: (1) participants believe that a preference, P, for deferring decisions while alternatives are explored, is better suited for dealing with an uncertain future, while (2) line managers value staff reporting to them who exercise a preference, J, for making a timely decision, in order to deliver more quickly on their objectives.

Addressing the Demands of External Stakeholders. There is a statistically significant relationship between personality type and comfort when addressing the demands of external stakeholders as reported by participants in relation to the process dimension, S-N, where S is positively correlated and N is negatively correlated to this factor. Interestingly, an opposite relationship is found in the perception of the line-managers of these participants, who find (at the same level of statistical significance) that N is positively correlated and S is negatively correlated to this factor.

In attempting to understand these opposite perspectives, it may be that the nature of the demands of external stakeholders are

TABLE 5
Summary of results for this study and previous research (Sieff and Carstens)

	FIRST-ORDER FACTORS						SECOND-ORDER FACTORS	
	1. Comfort with organisation fit	2. Future and strategic thinking	3. Demands of external stakeholders	4. Stress of balancing competing demands	5. Communicating Strategy to Stakeholders	1. Challenge with focus in the leadership role	2. Comfort with focus in the leadership role	
Pearson Correlation Coefficient								
Sieff, Carstens, 2006	pos	E I	pos	I E	pos E	pos I	inv F	
	inv	I 0.05	inv	E 0.01	inv I 0.05	inv E 0.01	pos E,T,J 0.05	
			pos	F 0.05	pos J 0.05	pos F 0.05	inv I,P 0.05	
			inv	T 0.05	inv J 0.05	inv T 0.05		
Participants	pos S 0.05	pos S 0.01	pos S 0.05	pos F 0.05	pos T 0.05	pos S 0.05	pos S 0.05	
Line-managers	inv N 0.05	pos P 0.05	inv N 0.05	inv T 0.05	inv F 0.05	pos N 0.05	inv N 0.05	
		inv J 0.05				inv S 0.05	pos E,P 0.05	
		pos J 0.01	pos I,N,J 0.05	pos P 0.05	pos P 0.05	inv S 0.05	inv I,J 0.05	
		inv P 0.01	inv E,S,F 0.05	inv J 0.05	inv J 0.05			
		pos F 0.05						
		inv T 0.05						
Sieff, Carstens 2006	pos	NT 0.01	pos	NF 0.05	pos	NF 0.05	pos	
Participants	pos SF 0.05	inv SF 0.01	pos SF 0.05	inv NF 0.05	inv	ST 0.05	pos ST 0.01	
	inv NT 0.05	pos NF 0.05	inv NT 0.05	pos NF 0.01	pos NF 0.05	inv NF 0.05	inv NF 0.05	
		pos NF 0.05		pos NF 0.05				
		inv NF 0.05		pos NF 0.01				
				pos NF 0.05				
ANOVA Analysis		ISTU, ENTP, ENTJ						
Sieff, Carstens		ISTU, ENTP, ENTJ						
Participants		0.05						
					ESTJ, ISTJ, ENTJ, ENTP			
					0.05			
Paired T-tests	Part. & Line-mngs	part>line	0.05	part<=>line	0.01	part>line	0.05	

less specific and detailed, and more strategic and conceptual in nature as managers ascend in seniority in a large organisation like this one. Hence mid-level managers who are the participants in this research would more likely be facing more specific and detailed demands from external stakeholders than would their line-managers, who in turn would be grappling more with conceptual issues and future possible demands in relation to these stakeholders. Line-managers would therefore place more value on those of their staff who have a preference for conceptualising about the future with regard to stakeholder needs in relation to this leadership focus factor.

Dealing with the Stress of Competing Demands. There is a statistically significant relationship between the personality type of the participants of this research and their approach to dealing with the stress of competing demands. This is evident in relation to the process dimension T-F, where F is positively correlated and T is negatively correlated to this factor. These findings correspond with those in previous research (Sieff & Carstens, 2006). As found previously, these differences in response between the Feeling and Thinking processes may be explained in terms of Thinking types applying logical, rational criteria to prioritise competing demands, while Feeling types are more likely to be attuned to competing values that cannot be easily prioritised.

Challenge with Focus in the Leadership Role. This second-order factor is comprised of the first-order factor, Stress of Balancing Competing Demands, and five other LFQ questions. Previous research (Sieff & Carstens, 2006) found a statistically significant relationship between the personality type of a leader and his or her approach to dealing with the challenges of focus in the leadership role. This was evident in relation to the NF-ST axes, where NF is positively correlated and ST is negatively correlated. It was suggested then that the differences in response between NF and ST can be understood in that ST types are more likely to focus on the details and apply a logical rational approach to dealing with conflicting challenges, while NF types are more likely to focus on the big picture, and may not pay attention to the detailed challenges in the leadership role. NF types may find it more difficult to use logical rather than value-based processes for prioritising conflicting demands.

In the current research, while no significant differences were found amongst participants in relation to this second-order factor, a significant difference did emerge amongst the perceptions of the line-managers of these participants. Line-manager responses show a significant positive relationship between the NF-axis and this factor, and a corresponding negative relationship with ST. Once again, we can explain this by referring to the organisational environment when this study took place – in the midst of a major change initiative affecting staff. It can be argued that the major challenges at the time were to manage staff feelings and assist them with their personal vision. These challenges would be well suited to managers with a preference for NF.

Differences with Leadership Focus between Personality Types. In both the current research and previous research (Sieff & Carstens, 2006) four of the sixteen personality types are most commonly found amongst the participants, namely, ESTJ, ISTJ, ENTP and ENTJ. Significant differences between these four personality types in the current research study were found in relation to only one of the seven factors, namely, 'Communicating Strategy to Stakeholders'. In the previous research, there was also only one factor where significant differences were found in relation to these four personality types, namely, 'Focus on Future and Strategy'.

It is not surprising that so few differences in leadership focus were discerned amongst these four personality types, since they share preferences commonly found amongst leaders in business organisations, particularly a preference for Thinking and Judging. In contrast to the other five factors under consideration,

these two factors both require some consideration of strategy. It is likely that the difference in preference on the S-N process dimension in particular, which addresses opposite ways of taking in and processing information, is likely to be a primary cause for the differences in approach to both of these strategy-related factors amongst the four most common personality types in this study and in previous research.

Relating the study to other research

This study challenges previous research that posits that Extraverted types are more commonly found in leadership roles (Kets de Vries, 2001; Sieff & Carstens, 2006). While there is evidence that Extraverted types are more comfortable with the challenges of leadership focus, are more confident in their ability to succeed in optimising their focus, and are therefore more likely to seek out and succeed in positions of leadership, this study suggests that both culture and situational variables may come into play. In the aftermath of a significant change intervention in an organisation, this research suggests that more Introverted, Feeling types may be sought after and best positioned to step into leadership roles.

While Fitzgerald and Kirby (1997) suggested that a diversity of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument types serves to assist organisations dealing with increasing internal complexity, this study with mid-level leaders indicates that in a time of organisational change affecting all staff, leaders with a preference for Feeling and Perception (or who are less likely to act in a typical Thinking, Judging manner) are better positioned for focus in the leadership role. These findings are at odds with previous research (Sieff & Carstens, 2006) where the target population is executives from a broad array of organisations (where any one change initiative in one organisation is not likely to reflect overall in results). In previous research, NF types reported that they were more challenged by focus in the leadership role than were ST types, and NT types reported that they were more comfortable than were NF types with focus in the leadership role.

Block (2003) suggested that transformational leadership has a greater impact on organisation culture than does transactional leadership. The findings from this study support in part previous research (Sieff & Carstens, 2006) that indicated that Introverted, Intuitive, Feeling and Perceiving types are less likely to experience optimal fit with their organisation than their opposite counterparts. This study indicates that Sensing types in particular are more comfortable with organisation fit than are Intuitive types. It may be concluded that personality types with these preferences are more likely to try to transform the organisation, given their more common experience of a lack of fit with the status quo.

Hautala (2005) showed that executives with Extraverted, Intuitive and Perceiving preferences favour transformational leadership. With the exception of the E-I dimension, these results correspond with Sieff and Carstens (2006), who found that ESTJ personality types are more likely to experience a comfortable fit with organisation type and are also more likely to engage in transactional leadership behaviour. In a business environment that increasingly demands transformational behaviour, there is a more pressing need for leadership personality types with a propensity to transform their organisations. This study suggests that these personality types are less likely to be as comfortable with stepping into the leadership role as are those types who are more inclined to transactional leadership; it may, however, be necessary to call upon them to assist with particular aspects of transformation. For example, the organisation (and other organisations in similar circumstances) may have been well advised to call upon leaders with a Feeling and Perceiving preference to guide it through its change initiative in Africa in 2006 and 2007.

Recommendations for organisation leaders

The findings of this study highlight a number of recommendations for organisation leaders. An understanding of personality type in relation to organisational context and current challenges is an important formula for effective self-management in the leadership role. Organisation leaders, with an understanding of personal type preferences, should consider which behaviour preferences are most likely to help to optimise focus in particular circumstances, and also which behaviour preferences may increase difficulty with leadership focus.

The findings of this research do not ascribe an optimal leadership focus for organisation leaders. This research highlights the importance of understanding organisational context as well as personality type in the leadership role. It should be remembered that the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument measures preferences, not aptitudes or capabilities. All organisation leaders, regardless of personality type, have the opportunity to optimise their leadership focus through a conscious application of the appropriate personality and behaviour attributes.

Recommendations for HR professionals

The study findings present HR professionals with important leadership development challenges that require a consideration of the differing organisational contexts that leaders may face, and the associated development areas that may depend on personality-type preference. As indicated in previous research (Sieff & Carstens, 2006) a strategic HR development role would assist such leaders to develop and balance their less preferred behaviours in order to find a more comfortable fit in dealing with the challenges of leadership focus. At the same time, they should not relinquish the benefits that their natural preference for Introversion and Feeling may bring to the leadership role. HR professionals need to encourage a more rounded set of behaviours that include appropriate practice of Introversion (or introspection and reflection) and Feeling behaviours when addressing challenges of change that have an impact on staff and stakeholders.

Limitations

This study has a number of limitations: (1) the sample size and make-up is limited to executives from Africa from one organisation who attended leadership programmes in 2006 and 2007; (2) other tools for assessing personality are not included in the research design; (3) the significance of the research findings is limited by the small population and sample size; and (4) the research does not provide an individual leader with a practical formula or model to develop the skills needed for optimal strategic focus.

Suggestions for further research

The relationship between personality type and the seven LQ research factors provides a basis for extending this study to a consideration of how leaders from different industry sectors may differ in their responses, given their different business and organisational contexts. For example, the internal and external environments associated with organisations operating in the retail sector may pose different challenges compared to those in the petrochemical or asset management sectors.

The relationship between personality type and leadership focus can also be explored with a wider array of personality assessment tools.

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